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ABSTRACT

Teacher selection and planning of appropriate transition activities for preschool age children is discussed in this paper. Teachers are encouraged to use transition time to provide an opportunity for imaginative and creative thinking and to avoid tedious waiting and chaos. Transition activities can be used as a teaching technique to prepare children to listen, to relax, to move from place to place and from activity to activity, and to allow opportunity to apply and reinforce learning while others in the group complete a task. Topics covered include the following: criteria for selection of transition activities; suggested transition activities; activities for grouping and moving children; activities for changing learning centers, cleaning up, or completing tasks; relaxation activities; preparation activities for the next activity and listening; and waiting activities. Specific learning activities to be used by preschool teachers are described under each topic. (DST)

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TRANSITION TIME: MAKE IT A LEARNING TIME

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Transition Time: Make it a Learning Time

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There are times during the day when children sit down, listen, take turns and share. There are periods when some children complete activities before others and there are periods when the group prepares to begin a new activity. These are times for movement from place to place in the room, as well as movement throughout the building. These are transition times and too often children hear "sit down, be quiet, wait and sh" rather than participate in activities that will make transition time a learning time.

Transition means a change or passing from one condition, place, thing, activity or topic to another. Young children spend much of their day in transition and these times call for planned activities to avoid tedious waiting and chaos.

Transition Activities

Transition activities are not teaching gimmicks but are a teaching technique. The purpose of the technique is to prepare the young learner to listen, to relax, to sit down, to motivate, to move from place to place, activity to activity, and to allow an opportunity to apply and to reinforce learning while others in the group complete the task.

The first transition time occurs when the young child comes from home to the pre school or day care center. The young child maybe active, imaginative, creative, curious, and eager to gain approval or the young child may be shy and hesitant to join into a new and different experience. Therefore; there must be a teacher or care giver who is caring, understanding, imaginative and creative , and a well planned environment that will provide an optimum learning and living experience.

Planning and Selection of Transition Activities

Transition activities differ from regular activities in purpose and length and the frequency they occur in the schedule. Some of the most successful activities develop from current lessons or activities. Transition activities usually require simple or easily available materials or no materials at all.

Transition times may be quiet or very active. Children need a variety and they will respond according to their individual feelings. Selection should be based on the developmental characteristics, needs and interests of the children, the activity preceding and the activity that will follow as well as the physical setting and space.

Criteria for Transition Activities

Consider the following criteria when selecting an activity for transition time:

- Purpose of the activity.
- Length of the activity.
- Activity preceding the transition time.
- Activity that will follow transition time.
- Instructional materials needed for the activity.
- Physical setting and available space for the activity.
- Type of activity - teacher directed, independent, large or small group.
- Learning opportunities involved.
- Directions needed to implement the activity.

Transition times require planning. Activities go along well until there has to be a change from one activity to another as children begin to complete tasks. This requires careful planning to make this period a time of learning as well as comfortably moving through daily routines.

Transition activities may be derived from a variety of sources. Finger play and poetry books, records, songs, rhythms and game books suggest many ideas that can be adapted for transition times.

Directions should be clearly stated for the children. Transition activities may be teacher directed or may be independent activities. They may be large group, small group or individualized activities. The carpet, circle area or designated tables provide an appropriate space for this type of activity.

Suggested Transition Activities

The following activities will provide ideas for planning transition times that will provide opportunities for learning. The creative and innovative teacher will expand this list of ideas and adapt to the needs of the learning experience.

Arrival

The first transition period occurs with the arrival from home to the pre school/day care center. Greet the children with a smile, a well planned day and a well planned learning environment.

-Construct a choice board to identify the learning centers in the room. By each center place a hook or number of hooks that identify spaces in the center available to the child. Allow the child to select a center to work in independently to begin the day.

-Cut out pictures of materials that are in the room from teacher supply catalogues or draw pictures. Glue each picture on a card. Have the child draw a card and then work with the material pictured on the card to begin the day.

-Place on tables or on the area rug materials and games for the children to use on arrival.

-Color code each center or different materials. Give the child a color upon arrival and let the child work with this material.

-Have a basket, bag, folder or cubby for each child. Select a material or activity and have this ready in their basket, bag, folder or cubby to begin the day.

-After the child has learned to recognize their name, place their name card on a material or activity to use to begin the day.

-Make an attendance chart for the child to identify presence.

Grouping and Moving Children Into an Activity

-Hold up card with the child's name written on it.

-Write child's name on a chalkboard.

-Pass an object to music. When the music stops the child goes to center or group. Objects could include seasonal items. Example: Valentine, Shamrock, Jack o' lantern

-Play musical chairs. When child is out he goes to the center or group.

-Play games to move or group children:

Children wearing a certain color.

Children riding a certain bus.

Children whose name begins with a particular letter.

-Make a set of number cards. Have each child select a number card or give a card to each child. Group the children by the numbers they have. Example: All the children who have the number two may..... This can also be done with colors, shapes, letters and pictures.

-Children may find their place by finding their name card at the different centers or place in the room. This may be used for activity time, snack or rest period.

-Collect pairs of pictures, upper and lower case letters or numerals and quantities. Mount on cards. Have children draw a card and then find their partner.

Activities for Changing Centers, Cleaning Up or Completing Tasks

-Use a signal to indicate it is time to change centers, complete task or clean up. Ring a bell, play the piano, flash lights, start a record, play a rhythm instrument, set a timer or alarm clock. Give a get ready signal and then a finish signal. This will allow the child an opportunity to find a stopping point, clean up and then move.

-Use a puppet to give directions to the children. Example: Finger puppets, paper bag or stick puppets. Teacher made or commercial puppets are appropriate.

-Attach a square of red paper, a square of yellow paper and a square of green paper to a stick. Display the red for work time, the yellow to clean up and the green to move to a new area. The colors can also be used to indicate sound level as well. Green can mean the appropriate sound level. Yellow can mean-caution we are getting to loud. Red can mean stop and get quiet and continue task.

-Singing can encourage cleaning up, completing task or changing centers.

-Clean up song (Tune Mulberry Bush)

This is the way we clean up our room
clean up our room, clean up our room
This is the way we clean up our room
and walk to the circle.

Substitute: Pick up blocks, put away work, or pick up toys

-Do you Know? (Tune Mary Had A Little Lamb)

Do you know what time it is
Time it is, time it is
Do you know what time it is?
It is time to ...

(clean up our work, finish our work, eat our lunch, go to the playground,

go home, take a rest.)

-Sing while putting away materials

-Play a record for the children to listen to as they clean up.

Select different types of music and music appropriate to the seasons and concepts studied.

-On the piano play:

A F
Lis-ten
C A D C A
Come to the Circle
C F
Clean up

Activities to Relax

-Pretend you are a bowl of jello or jelly and shake all over.

-Pretend to be popcorn in a popcorn popper.

-Give simple comands for movement to relax. Example: Clap your hands, touch your toes, pat your knees.

-Play exercise records and tapes to release energy.

-Pretend to blow up a big balloon. Blow hard until the balloon bursts.

-Pretend to rock the baby and sing "Rock a by baby".

-Walk in imaginary shapes. Example: circle, square and triangle.

-Walk in the shape of numbers and letters.

-Repeat finger games.

-Imagine you are a tired puppy. Yawn, stretch and roll on the floor.

Then get still.

-Read or recite poems. Example:

I know it's best to take a rest.

I have a little key.

I lock my eyes

Pull down my shades (close eyes)

I can not talk or see.

(Author unknown)

-Sing or listen to music.

-Circle games provide an opportunity to relax. Children can join the game as they complete tasks. Example:

"Farmer in the Dell," "Round and Round the Village," "Hokey Pokey,"
"Did you Ever See a Lassie?", "Locky Loo," "Mulberry Bush,"
"Pop Goes the Weasel," "Skip to My Lou," "Oats, Peas, Beans and
Barley."

-Play games. Example:

"Simon Says," "I Spy" and "Moving Water, Still Water."

Activities to Prepare for the Next Activity

-Sit like Indians in the circle.

-Sit on a shape.

-Sit on a letter or number.

-Sit in a circle, square or triangle

-The flannel boards can provide an interesting focus for attention to introduce a story or counting activities.

-Chant "together, together, let's all do something together." Chant again and substitute the name of the activity instead of "do something." This prepares the children for a large group activity.

-Give the children a riddle.

-Clap hands in a rhythmic pattern. Rhythm instruments may be used.

-Construct a "feel box" or a "feel bag" or a "look box" or a "look bag".

Place in the bag or box an item suggesting the next activity or topic.

-Cover a picture that identifies the concept to be presented in the activity with a sheet of paper. Cut small slits and number the slits. Open the slits and have the children guess the topic.

-Provide a box of items. One child removes an object and the others guess what is missing.

Activities to Prepare for Listening

-Have the children follow simple directions. Example: Stand up, turn around, sit down. Expand the directions.

-Repeat familiar nursery rhymes and omit words. Example:

Jack be nimble, Jack be quick

Jack jumped over the _____.

-Lock your lips and put the key on your shoulder.

-Play the "Show Me" game.

Show me how you can sit down.

Show me your eyes.

Show me your ears.

Show me how you can listen.

-To encourage listening and attention tell the travel story.

I am going on a trip and I am going to take a suitcase. In my suitcase I will put a _____.

Name an object and each child will add to the objects and repeat all objects in the suitcase.

-Put on magic listening ears and magic looking eyes.

-Put on elephant ears, rabbit ears, mouse ears, or cat ears.

-Clap hands loudly and quickly. Gradually clap hands more softly and slowly until hands are in lap and all is quiet.

-Repeat a rhyme loudly and quickly. Then get softer and slower until all is quiet.

-Play the "Wiggle Game". Wiggle body parts. End the game with wiggling whole self and then sitting still and quiet.

-Pretend to be a leaf, feather, snowflake, butterfly. Quietly whirl around and then sit down quietly.

-Sing "Listening Song" Tune: Mary Had a Little Lamb

Now it's time to sit and listen

Sit and listen, sit and listen

Now it's time to sit and listen,

Listen to our teacher

(Substitute listen to the story.)

-Find children who are listening. Say "I like the way _____
is listening or ready to listen."

Activities to Move the Children from Place to Place

-See how many different ways you can move to the playground. Gallop
like a horse, hop like a bunny, waddle like a duck.

-Walk down the hall looking for color, counting steps, counting designated items or thinking to self about something.

-Pretend you are a fireman carrying the water hose as you walk in line.

(During fire prevention week make fireman hats to wear.)

-Pretend to wear tip-toe boots, Indian moccasins or elf shoes.

-When walking outside listen for sounds - birds, automobiles and etc.

-When walking to the playground pretend to row a boat, drive a car or
ride a bicycle.

-Make a dragon, worm or caterpillar by attaching a head to one end of
a rope and a tail to the other end. Have the children make the body
and legs by holding on to the rope with one hand when walking down
the hall or to the playground.

-Walk like animals. Example: elephant, bear, camel.

-Cut out different color footprints. Laminate if possible and arrange
in a pattern for children to follow to the next activity. The child
can follow the blue footprints or the red footprints to a new activity.

-Play train with the teacher as the engine. Walk around the room with
the teacher calling names for children to stop in the area and

work on activity. (Substitute airplane with teacher as pilot or space shuttle.)

-The "count down" game can move children from place to place. Count 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, "blast off." This can be extremely active if desired.

-Walk like ghost, turkeys, reindeer, Santa's elves, snowflakes, leprechauns, and bunnies. This can include holiday ideas in transition.

Activities When Waiting for the Group to Complete an Activity

-Cover a box with contact paper. Cut out shapes of fish and draw an activity on each fish. Attach a paper clip to each. Make a fishing pole by attaching a string and magnet to any small stick. As children complete one activity they can go fishing to discover the next activity.

-In folders, large envelopes or boxes provide activities for children to use when they have completed a task. The area rug or a special table will provide an appropriate place for this activity.

-Make a pocket chart using envelopes or library card pockets. On small cards write a brief activity or draw pictures of activities for the child to do while waiting for others to complete task.

-On completion of one activity tape a picture on child's back as others complete task they describe picture to each other so the child can guess the picture he is wearing. This can be done with colors, shapes and numbers.

-Construct a choice board or planning board to identify learning centers. After an assigned task has been completed, a child uses the choice board or planning board to select a center to work in independently.

-Prepare a listening station with a tape player or record player and

head sets. Provide songs, stories and poetry for independent listening.

Transition time should provide an opportunity for imaginative and creative thinking as well as motivating, relaxing, reinforcing and preparing children for the continuing learning experience. With appropriate selection and planning of activities to meet the needs of the young child transition time can be learning time.

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